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The psychology of impressionism.

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THE PSYCHOLOGY OF IMPRESSIONISM

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THE PSYCHOLOGY OF IMPRESSIONISM.

The modern expansion of art-forms and the inauguration of psychological research have given a new direction to aesthetic theories. In conformity with the scientific trend of our age beauty is thought of in some such phrase as "characteristic expressiveness for sense-perception" or "the harmonious functioning of the organism," rather than as Hegel's "shining of the idea through matter" or Schelling's "perception of the infinite in the finite." A well-known psychologist, realizing that aesthetic canons are bound up with problems of physiology and psychology looks forward to the time when the work of art will be produced according to scientific prescription. There is no more striking instance of this relation than Impressionistic painting in its application of the results of Helmholtz, Chevreul and Fechner. It was a kind of protest, in the light of these researches, against the accepted psychology of art. This paper proposes to examine how far recent psychological investigation has justified the grounds of that protest.

The term Impressionism has, apart from its popular signification as a synonym for technical incompetence, two distinct meanings. First, it is

used in a general sense of that kind of painting which is opposed to making a picture a catalogue of objects, and which paints things "in the order of attention." This has been called Subjective or Emotional Impressionism. In this sense, not only Velasquez, Robusti and Rubens, but Watteau, Claude Gelléc, Turner, Constable and Carot were the precursors of a movement which embraced such oppositions of individual expression as Whistler and Degas, Manet and Brangwyn, Hornel and Liebermann.

The term is used, however, in a more specific way to express the technical methods of those French artists who sought to get rid of academic rules, of the literary "tone" of art, and to make painting the "visual language of the imagination." It is known as Objective or Scientific Impressionism; sometimes in the more appropriate term Chromatism. These Chromatists, led by Claude Monet, threw all the weight on the aesthetic value of colour. Subject, which is mainly a question of form (and therefore of line) they ignored, because the attainment of correct form is scarcely ever compatible with that purity of colour sought by them. They rejected the idea that a picture should be (in Whistler's phrase) "a method of bringing about a literary climax." One may ignore or generalize

forms of nature only: subject and line must control all figure painting. On that account pictures by Monet, Sisley, Pissarro, Cezanne, and Emile Claus are chiefly of landscape, where the aesthetic charm of pure colour could be best attained. Their technical methods of dissociated tones, the study of values, the effects of complementary colours are thus described (G. Moore, Modern Painting, p. 87):

"Browns and blacks disappeared from the palettes of those who did not wish to be considered presque du Louvre. Venetian reds, siennas and ochres were in process of abandonment and the palette came to be composed very much in the following fashion: violet, white, blue, white, green, white, red, white, yellow, white, orange, white,- the three primary colours and the three secondary colours with white placed between each so as to keep everything as distinct as possible and avoid in the mixing all soiling of the tones."

So, also, a French critic (Aréat: Psychologie du peintre, 1892): "Les tachistes, eux, couvrent leur toile de larges gouttes vertes, jaunes, bleues, lilacées, etc.; ils accouplent les rayons du prisme sur un fond neutre, et laissent à nos yeux la charge de recomposer à distance le ton voulu." The movement became more scientific under the Neo-Impressionists

and the Synchronists[#] (see J. Meier-Graefe, Modern Art Vol. I. p. 311), but the underlying psychological bases were alike, and these have been excellently summarised by Mauclair in the following statement: "In nature no colour exists by itself. The colouring of objects is a pure illusion.....the mystery of matter escapes us; we do not know the exact moment when reality separates itself from unreality. All we know is that our vision has formed the habit of discerning in the universe two notions: form and colour: but these two notions are inseparable. Only artificially can we distinguish between outline and colour: in Nature the distinction does not exist."

In such a statement the aesthetic sentiment rests almost wholly on physiological grounds, a particular case of Fechner's "aesthetics from below." It recognises only the direct factor mentioned in "Vorschule der Aesthetik;" it does not recognise the indirect non-sensuous factor, "that large and important part of aesthetic effect which arises from association, suggestion, or the play of the imagination" (Sully). Now, in the direct factor there are two components (1) the sensuous or material (2) the formal or relational, and we have seen that the Chromatists disregarded

[#] Cubism, be it noted, is in direct antithesis to Impressionism: see the book on this subject by Gleize and Metzinger.

the second of these. How far were they justified in restricting the aesthetic sentiment to the sensuous or material element, rejecting not only the relational elements but also the factors "from above?" Is there an aesthetic gain in exploiting the value of colour at the expense of line and mass? This leads to a more fundamental consideration, viz. the relative aesthetic value of line and colour. It is therefore to the psychology of the primary states of consciousness that we turn - to sensation and feeling as far as these relate to form and colour - for an explanation of this manifestation of the art-impulse.

Our first consideration is as to the relative pleasurable-ness of form and colour as simple and separate manifestations. In his discussion of the qualities of bodies Locke distinguishes ("Human Understanding" Bk II. ch 2) between primary and secondary qualities. In the former, bulk, figure, situation, motion or rest are inherent qualities "whether we perceive them or no:" in the latter, bodies may have sensible qualities by which they have the power of producing impressions in us. To the first order belongs form, to the second colour. Proceeding on this basis, Ruskin ("Modern Painters" Vol. I. Part II.Sec.1, Chap.5) - as might have been expected of one who defines art as "that which gives

the greatest number of the greatest ideas" - asserts that "colour even as a source of pleasure is feeble compared with form." Ruskin is, of course, thinking of line and mass in landscape painting which gives "the greatest ideas", i.e. of the indirect factor in aesthetics; and modern book-illustration and photographic reproduction shew that this agrees in the main with ordinary experience. Further, it has been observed by Loewe "Rendering of Nature in Greek Art" (p.29) "that the greater number of memory-images are undetermined by colour." But is this the case on the level of the sensations as experimental psychology has examined them? We know that the whole retinal field is able to receive the stimuli of form while only a restricted area may be stimulated by colour (Külpe). The comparative frequency of colour-blindness is evidence of the relative instability and probably later development of the colour-sense (Grant Allen), which is further attested by the presence of rods without cones in lower visual organisms. Even before there is any vision, we have a muscular and tactual apparatus for perceiving space arrangements (Stratton, Exper. Psych. and Culture p. 250). To this must be added the fact that what we call "local colour" is an adventitious quality. "There is no colour peculiar to any object, but only more or less rapid vibration of light upon

its surface" (Mauclair). Colour is essentially, then, of the nature of a luxury, probably the aesthetic climax of a biological evolution (as Grant Allen asserts) whereby the utilitarian taste at first developed in man's frugivorous ancestors has survived in somewhat disinterested forms.

Let us first consider the effect of single lines or colours, before dealing with harmonies arising from their combination. Before doing so, it is necessary to determine the relation of sensation to feeling. When the organs of sense are stimulated, a double process is started, on the one hand a cognitive process leading to perception, on the other, an affective process leading to feeling. As to whether these processes are independent and simultaneous there is much controversy among psychologists. Are feelings the attributes of sensations, or functions of sensations, or the product of an independent conscious process? The extremes of these views are represented in the Herbartian (intellectualist) school and in the James-Lange' (physiological) school. The latest representative of the Herbartians considers feeling as "the consciousness of the fusion or inhibition of the presentations" (Volkmann Lehrbuch der Psychologie). They are not primary or independent states, but rather

the "consciousness of the process of ideation itself." This intellectualistic basis of feeling, if it could be substantiated, would be a serious argument against the Impressionist's method, for it would indicate an initial bias which the perceptive process had acquired, and so would make more difficult the task of placing the psychology of Impressionism on aesthetic grounds. Wundt, however, (Phys. Psych. I.534, 3rd Ed.) in developing his tridimensional theory of feeling has made an effective criticism of the Herbartian position. Perhaps recent psychology has gone to the other extreme. When Fechner, criticising Lotze, pointed out that "the psychically unitary and simple are resultants of a physical manifold" he stated the crucial problem on which the recent physiological theories are based. These theories connect all states of feeling with biological conditions, and consider them as the direct and immediate expressions of the physical organism that have their roots in the needs and instincts (and therefore are connected with the movements) of the individual. But James, propounding this "psychology without a soul", whilst he insists that "each of us knows sensations and feelings only as introspectively distinguishable but inseparable, parts of the stream of his own consciousness, and that nothing in our experience justifies us

in believing that such mind-dust exists or can exist," is forced to admit that although "the soul presents nothing, herself creates nothing, is at the mercy of the material forces for all possibilities, still, amongst these possibilities she selects and by reinforcing one and checking others, she figures not as an 'epiphenomenon', but as something from which the play gets moral support." This selective function in the production of sensations and feeling is evidently not to be explained on physiological grounds: it is an antecedent condition to the "possibilities arising from material forces." Rejecting then these intellectualistic and physiological theories, there remains the alternative towards which recent experimental psychology seems to tend, viz. that "affection must be given an elemental rank in consciousness as a process coordinate with sensation" (Titchener, Feeling and Attention, Lectures IV and VII). From the fact that feeling is never present without sensation, some psychologists such as Sully prefer to modify this statement by considering feeling the subjective quality or "tone" of sensation, though it may be noted here that this feeling-tone differs from sensation in that it is not a localized agreeableness, as e.g. in the sensation of yellow. In order that it

may not be an indifferent sensation the whole organism is adjusted to this stimulus, for pleasurable or disagreeable feeling qualifies the whole of consciousness and does not attach itself exclusively to any sensation or other distinguishable element of the stream of consciousness. (McDougall, Body and Mind p. 312).

As a rule all the simple sense-feelings exhibit the "tone" of being agreeable or disagreeable. Sensibility to pleasure and pain may thus be said to be the essential element in our affective states (see Titchener, Külpe, Marshall in loco) though Wundt has enumerated three pairs of qualities. Only the first Wundtian pair, however (i.e. pleasure-pain) can have reference to the sense-feelings concomitant with visual sensations; and of these only the hedonic aspect of feeling may be considered, for lines and colours can hardly be positively painful. At most, the range would be from positive to neutral in the field of pleasure. For single lines and colours, at any rate, it is doubtful if the feeling ever becomes unpleasant, as is shewn by the well-known diagrams (see Ladd, Ziehen, Titchener) illustrating Weber's law of the relation of stimuli to sensations and to the pleasure-pain qualities of feeling.

As an illustration of this relation consider the sensation (say) of a yellow colour on a piece of cardboard. Light-waves , which reach the eye at the rate of 500 billions per second in order to produce the sensation of yellow, stimulate the nerve cells in that part of the retinal field round the yellow spot, where on account of the greater number of cones the susceptibility to colour vibrations is greater. At the same time that these vibrations from the yellow card reach the eye other vibrations reach it. The neural activities set up in the peripheral organ are various, and before sensation is possible some instinctive choice has to be made of that series of vibrations most in harmony (we must presume) with the functioning of the organism. The brain, it is true, "receives all those nervous impulses that result in consciousness, but parts acted on by external physical agents (like the retina) and the parts transmitting the nervous impulse (like the optic nerve) are in a sense as much concerned in the production of conscious states as the brain itself" (McKendrick and Snodgrass, *Physiol. of the Senses*, p. 288). Even at this stage an involuntary attention has been engaged in the choice of the series which (in this case) was to become the sensation of yellow. Such a choice, even at this early stage, in-

volves the recognition of a primal psychic activity, under the control of which the eye moves in the direction of this chosen series. In this way a certain quality has been given to the stimulations by this consciousness "which is not confined to the recesses of the nerve-cells in the cortex of the cerebral hemispheres, but active also through the whole organism in the production of conscious states." The motor aspect of affection enters thus into even the initial stage of the process. The series of rhythmic vibrations thus selected for attention by the movement of the eye is in the position of the "most favoured nation." The repeated stimulations, as the result of this attention, gain in intensity, are propagated more harmoniously to the sensory cortex, and we become conscious of a sensation, which in a further stage becomes the perception of yellow. It has been argued that our sense of agreeableness is explained by the kinaesthetic sensations aroused by these movements and accommodations of the eye, that these and the nervous changes and photochemical reactions which were the physiological phenomena of colour-vision warranted us in judging that pleasure and pain are determined by the efficiency or inefficiency of the visual organs, pleasure being dependent upon the use of surplus stored force.

Ladd has shewn that such physiological explanations, while accepted as accompanying motor correlatives of the affective state considered as pleasure-pain do not form a complete explanation. And even if we could reduce to simple terms of functional enhancement or arrest the complicated physiological concomitants of agreeableness, still the "meaning" of this enhancement or arrest must be referred to a psychic activity for "the sensory content of the consciousness of an object has for its physical correlate a number of discrete processes in the brain which in no sense constitute a unitary whole." (McDougall op.cit.p. 311). Even bearing in mind the conclusions of Féré (Sensation and Movement, p.34) and Lehmann that every stimulus calls forth a modification of the activities of the body which modification, according to the intensity and the duration of the stimulus, takes the character, either of enhancement or of arrest; and that in general, moderate stimulation promotes harmonious functioning and thus begets the feeling of pleasure in us, we do not thereby infer that this dilatation and increase of innervation constitute the pleasure, but rather that when consciousness by attending to the stimulus has given it a "meaning" of agreeableness, this function is enhanced and promoted. The lack of such

a "meaning" accounts for the fact that the other series of simultaneous vibrations from the luminiferous ether do not reach the stage of sensation, and give no agreeable tone because they are disregarded. The "vast mass of optic effects are practically indifferent" (Marshall, Pain, Pleasure and Aesth. p.292). To this enhancement or inhibition of function is primarily due the art-impulse. Modern psychology has placed greater importance on the fact which lies at the root of all imitation-theories and play-theories of art, viz. that every affective state can be interpreted in terms of activity and that pleasure (Hirn, Origins of Art p.35) "acute or massive appears as the result of a stimulus which owing to a happy proportion between its intensity and the functional capacity of the organ has modified the bodily functions in such a way as to produce manifestations of energy." It is only by reference to the instinctive impulse to such imitative movements that we can explain the development of art-forms and the enjoyment of art. In the primary constituents of the sensation of yellow e.g. there is probably little more than response to stimuli (as Jastrow asserts) just as in a single tone from (say) a tuning-fork; pure tones are not those which music employs; and "even down in the simple sensations of sound as well as of colour the

pleasure is due in part to the presence of something in contrast to mere sensation - is due to the conjunction of sensation with the order and form in which the materials of such sensations are arranged." There is a spatial element even in the sensation of color. This was shewn very clearly in the excellent experiments made by G. Bullough with colored triangles. Not only weight (i.e. dark colors under light) determined the preference, but also area and length of time of exposure. (Cf. Exp. by Clark, Goodall and Washburn on "effect of area etc"). Such a "sensation-mass" of uncertain localization as that from the cardboard though apparently perceived by the motionless eye is accompanied by a vast number of photo-chemical changes in the retinal field; and it is probable that the mere focussing of attention upon any colour-mass necessary to bring it into consciousness at all is accompanied by sensations and memory-images of sensations which belong to the tactual and muscular sense (Ladd, Descr. Psych. p.145). From such considerations Titchener (Attention and Feeling p.106) concludes that isolated patches of colour and isolated tones are usually indifferent; while Exner and other investigators admit that the influence of contrast both as to tint and intensity overrides all calculations as to agreeableness

of single colours. The immediate agreeableness of colour in suitable circumstances is, however, generally admitted, and in most cases assumed. It is not so easy to admit this concomitant affection in the case of line-sensations. For with line we get beyond the elements of response to stimuli. The motor element and motor innervation become prominent. It is frequently asserted that even if straight lines are indifferent, the eye finds pleasure in curves. This has been attributed to the ease of muscular activity of the various parts of the eye. But in recent experiments (Stratton: Exper. Psych. and Culture pp.238-40) the movements of the eye have been shewn to be very irregular and by no means suggestive of ease. The sensation of line is not merely "the demand of the eye" but also the "somatic resonance." This may only produce energetic and not necessarily harmonious functioning. It was the search for the aesthetic quality which underlay Hogarth's analysis of the serpentine line "leading the eye a kind of chase," as it underlies the recent theory of the sculptor Hildebrand - the theory of the "Fernbild" or distant view of form arising "from the demands of the eye." Even the simple sensation of line is a complex form of mental activity, which does not exhibit the immediate agreeableness of feeling, which

we find in colour. It seems justifiable to conclude therefore that so far as single lines and simple colours are concerned line has not so great affective potentialities as colour; that is to say, it is less aesthetic in character.

So far, only the psychology of the earliest stages of feeling has been examined. We have seen that all sensory stimuli must be referred to some primal psychic activity which makes a choice as to which series of stimuli is conducive to the welfare of the organism; that this choice determines our attention to the stimulus; that the pleasure which accompanies sensation cannot, even in the primary stage, be satisfactorily accounted for by physiological considerations only; that such pleasure arises from the rhythmic nature of the stimulus which produces an affective state concomitant with sensation; that attention is the psychic effort to enhance the harmonious functioning of such a stimulus the motor counterpart of which is seen in such organic modifications as increased respiration, quicker pulse-beat, nervous reaction. By applying these conclusions to the relative effects of line and colour, it was found that colour was more immediate in its effect and therefore 'a priori' better suited to develop an affective state; that the kinaesthetic factors of the sensation of line gave it

a bias to the cognitive process, and that, since colour and line were inseparable elements (at least so far as colour was concerned) the tendency was for the aesthetic quality to be suppressed. On this lower ground, then, the Impressionist, on account of the effort to give his work a purely aesthetic significance divested of literary association was justified in preferring colour to the disregard (as far as possible) of the line-element.

The shading of such an embryonic process into the so-called aesthetic feelings makes psychological disintegration more difficult. But, however doubtful may be the aesthetic value of simple lines and colours, it is at least certain that space arrangements and colour-groups have acknowledged pleasure-giving factors. The difficulties of explaining whence this pleasure arises lie in the interplay of representative factors which are involved in the development of percepts from sensations. Külpe, indeed, has the interesting suggestion that the aesthetic feelings arise from our judgments about this interplay of elements. The selective character of primary attention in the sensory process has already given hints of such a function of an instinctive nature. Interest is such an instinctive judgment. But this is different from the intellectualistic function

of judgment referred to by Külpe. And indeed the problem for the Impressionists was how far art could resist the intrusion of such judgments. Sensations, then, as they develop to perception are modified in greater or less degree, by their affective tone. The effects of feeling on visual perception (Ladd, *Descr. Psych.* p. 365) are direct and indirect, the one a matter of the fusion of suggested images with the relatively meagre sensuous factors; the other through the relation which interest bears to attention. It is the influence of this feeling-tone so closely intertwined with attention, which is to determine whether the ideating process will result in an aesthetic state or whether the emotion will be suppressed. "When emotions are at their maximum" writes Pillsbury ("Attention" p. 193) "earlier experience is not at work in the control of thought and action, but some stimulus, owing to its instinctive appeal, has become dominant in unusual degree. When all of the conditions of attention are active in normal strength, emotion is suppressed." If we ask why emotion is suppressed in one instance and the instinctive appeal is dominant in another, we return to the conflicting theories to which we referred in connection with the simple feelings, and the answer is again given: the nexus of sensations and of organic and motor reactions is innate: the instinctive impulse for enhancement of function prompts

the individual to attain to the repetition of these stimuli which have been found harmonious. The promptings to this attainment are known as the art-impulse. Such promptings, however, disturb the perceptual process, which can only result in clear percepts when the disturbing pleasure-pain element is near the indifference-point. Bergson has shewn how large a part is played by this feeling tone of sensation in disturbing the perceptual process, especially as regards remembering and reproducing sensations. On this account perception has been called sensation with a "meaning", and it is to be remembered that we are better able, as Schulze, Bullough, Scripture and others have shewn, to give this "meaning" to line than to colour. The Impressionists, who sought a direct sensuous appeal, were, therefore, so far, justified in their preference.

In describing the affective state of agreeableness which was a concomitant of the sensation from the yellow cardboard we noted that this state though it arose from the stimulation of the peripheral organ did not come into consciousness unless the whole organism accepted it. This "somatic resonance" to feeling determines all impulse and leads to conscious striving for revival of what has been thus selected as advantageous to the organism. Where therefore such a sensation

is objectified by consciousness becoming a percept, the agreeable element becomes enhanced by associations of former experiences. If the agreeableness is sufficiently strong, the intellectual process will be arrested and the affective process enhanced. The art-impulse has its material in these recollected emotions. (cf. Wordsworth's definition of poetry: "emotion recollected in tranquillity"). The effect e.g. in the perception of yellow would be that with this colour would be associated not such perceptions as gold, sulphide of arsenic, the Chinese, jealousy, but rather oranges, autumn, sunset, daffodils; in this latter group the feeling-element would be enhanced. On account of the opposing character of such memory-images Ribot has given two divisions of imagination - the practical and the aesthetic. But such a division seems hardly necessary. Since art is the development of activities prompted by instinctive impulse, the art-forms which at first were the social results of such activities became separated from their direct relation to concrete utilities. They acquired an autotelic character to a great extent, but art "never ceases to inform, never ceases to please, never ceases to stimulate, never loses something of a magical efficacy." (Hirn, Origins of Art, p.301). Not enough weight is

attached to this aspect of the art-impulse by the play-theories of Schiller (probably due to Home), Spencer and Groos, and to a less extent by the imitation theories. In its autotelic character the art-impulse has, it is true, something in common with play and on account of its relation to motor reactions of the organism it has been explained in the physiological way in which Herbert Spencer has explained the play-impulse (Princ. of Psych. Vol.II pp.629,630). But they are not identical as Groos (following Schiller: see Hirn, op. cit.p.26) has argued. The permanence of the art-product, its teleological import, is a fundamental distinction. The imitation theory, also, though as old as Aristotle (Physica II, 2, Poeties ch.I) has acquired recent physiological emphasis. The Lange-James theory of emotion insists on the priority of the motor manifestations of feeling which are at the basis of the imitation idea. An agreeable feeling is produced by a certain (moderate) stimulus of the sense-organ, and the enhancement of this function is gained by repeating the movement (Féré: Sensation et Mouvement). All imitation-explanation of the art-impulse depends on this fact. Even an undefined feeling of vigour can acquire distinctness only by expressing itself in some mode of physical or mental activity. And this motor element,

which provokes imitation, (Souriau: "La Suggestion dans l' Art") plays an important part in the revival of feeling for "it is impossible to revive a feeling without reviving its organic conditions." (Ribot: Psych. of the Emotions pp. 127-9). The fundamental distinction, however, is in the fact that "the aim of play is attained when the surplus of vigour is discharged or the instinct has had its momentary exercise. But the function of art is not confined to the act of production; in every manifestation of art, properly so called, something is made and something survives." (Hirn, op.cit. p.29). From this impulse to make permanent the revivability of feelings has arisen the art forms, each a psychological deduction of some individual who had a pleasurable experience of which he sought to reproduce the grounds, by a mimic creation, either for himself or others. It is in such a way e.g. that by means of landscape painting men who are required to live in cities have gratified their "feeling for nature." Wordsworth has beautifully expressed this in his "Lines on Revisiting the Banks of the Wye, 1798."

"Oft in lonely rooms,
And mid the din of towns and cities,
I have owed to them sensations sweet,
Felt in the blood and felt along the heart,

And passing even into my purer mind
With tranquil restoration."

It is in the city that men's imaginations are exercised to revive feelings of pleasure from nature. When men lived close to nature their contemplation always took practical shape. Schiller remarks that "the Greeks artistic as they were and blessed with so genial a climate have some accuracy in the description of a landscape, but only as they might describe a weapon, a shield or a garment. Nature appears to have interested their understanding rather than their feelings." The aesthetic contemplation of nature succeeded those practical attractions, and the "dehumanised" conception has led to an exaggerated idea of the disinterestedness of art. Still, the fact that all art is at bottom imitative, (however ideally as Taine suggests) indicates that it has always some element of interest in it. In such an art-form as Impressionism we see the effort at complete emancipation from any utilitarian motives, the delight in the sensuous pleasure for its own sake, as that is more nearly approximated in "pure" music. While, therefore, it is true that the aesthetic pleasure comes from the complex influences of association and imagination on perception, the ideational basis of perception is never quite submerged; so that it is

only ideally that we speak of the "conscious happiness in which one is absorbed and as it were immersed in the sense-object." (Calkins, Introduction to Psych). This absorption in the sense-object called by Guyau "irradiation" is possible in music, but more difficult in pictorial art for a reason which may now be given in some detail. We return then to the relations of line-arrangement and colour harmony.

We have seen that eye-movements and accommodations are directly related to our perceptions of space whether we assume Berkeley's tactual theory or grant that space may be perceived independently and similarly by touch and sight. Closely connected with this motor aspect is the Lippsian principle of "inner activity"; a tendency to "feel into" a line an "inner activity" created by the imagination. "Graceful lines" writes Stratton (Exp. Psych. and Culture p. 240) "are by experience often found to be the expression of movements that are under perfect control.....so that the lines which please us are those which suggest, though perhaps very dimly, a life that is master of the situation. Such life we sympathize with and what we sympathize with we imitate. We often feel ourselves vaguely participating in the movement suggested by pleasing curves." An extreme example of this sympathy

is given by Lee and Thompson (Art. "Beauty and Ugliness", Contemp. Review, 1897), the concluding sentence of which is: "A complete and equally distributed set of bodily adjustments has accompanied the ocular sight of the jar; this totality of movements and harmony of movements in ourselves answers to the intellectual fact of finding that the jar is a harmonious whole." This "intellectual fact" in which association takes so great a part, may be found still more evident in combinations of lines and relative shapes of masses. Recent experiments in balance and symmetry shew that a certain mathematical ratio though not invariable as in musical tones, accompanies those forms which are found to be most agreeable. Fechner's "golden section" rectangle is well-known in this respect, though a recent application of it seems to have escaped the investigators. In his "Science and Practice of Drawing" (p. 289, App.) H. Speed has given examples from well-known pictures of the apparently fortuitous agreement of this ratio with experimental results. The ratio is called "the proportion" (1:1.6.....as in Fechner). Its remarkable consistency of appearance in such pictures as "Las Meninas", "Bacchus and Ariadne", "Love and Death" (Watts), and "The Birth of Venus" (Botticelli) shews how fundamental is this inscrutable balance of parts.

We have another instance of how great a part the motor elements of sensation play in the psychology of form in the rule stated by P.G. Hamerton (Notes on Aesthetics, 1889) that in a picture any issue or suggested opening should always be rather to the right and that any large mass blocking the composition of the picture should be to the spectator's left. He referred to researches by M. Delaunay which shewed that the habit of people was to move to the right, due to the usual predominance of the left side of the brain. So, too, D. S. MacColl in a fine passage ("A Year of Post-Impressionism" XIX Century, Feb. 1912): "In the lines of abstract ornament you will often get a more striking impression of conflict or repose than from the most document-supported picture of battle or sleep; and it is this element, the music of space and form, that really plays to the imagination behind the images that represent person or thing. A division of the paper will do more to enthrone a figure or dignify a landscape than the dress of kings or the presence of palaces, and the drift or swing of a composition across the canvas be more eloquent of its motive than the particular attitude and occupation of its constituent persons." We are forced to conclude then that though a certain agreeableness of feeling is aroused by simple space arrangements which compel the organism to "a rhythmical mode of

being", yet when the imitative instincts and the suggestions of memory-images arouse the imagination to expression the value of the original affective character is almost lost in the resultant aesthetic emotion. So that though in the primary stage the value of color as an aesthetic component is greater than line, ultimately it does not retain its importance. In the psychology of any art-form the potent influences of suggestion and memory in the reproductive process must be acknowledged. Lotze ("Microcosmus, Bk III Chap.V) has this statement: "We derive aesthetic satisfaction only from a plurality which may be apprehended as a clearly discerned unity;" yet this unity of the manifold which an impressionistic picture presents is only the "vague gentle pleasure gained from immediate impressions of the color sense," an "attenuated hypnosis." Besides this vague pleasure, however, which really implies the shifting of a focus in consciousness over a wide pleasure field - such as we see in a picture of Corot's, or in a Whistler "Nocturne", or in a landscape by Monet - there must be, as in Rembrandt, a more decided centre of interest flitting more or less lightly over this vague field. This important factor of attention or centre of interest it is important to recognise, in spite of the fact that the intellectualistic theories emphasised it to the suppression of the aesthetic element

which is fundamental. The Impressionist by refusing to stimulate attention to form - and indeed frequently by expressing it so badly as to deprive us of the satisfaction of expectancy (Bergman, quoted by Marshall) - shifted the centres of interest entirely to colour. It has been said (Stratton, op.cit.p.260) that a "display of colour itself, apart from any inherent imitative meaning in its arrangement, is capable of producing noble effects", and sunset effects are adduced as evidence of this. But the pleasure arising from sunset effects, if the foregoing arguments are valid, is as far removed from a mere display of colour without any inherent imitative meaning as can well be imagined. The parallel case to music which has no inherent imitative meaning would be the Persian carpet, and even of this it is true that "the really good carpets are themselves a kind of picture, dependent for the sting of their beauty on the remote 'subject' that went to their design." (MacColl op.cit.). Of the Post-Impressionist Serusier wrote "one thing must be noted, i.e. the absence of subject.....The purpose, even the concept of the object represented, disappears before the charm of his coloured forms." Now, if we refer again to music, this never happens even in the most Straussian of tone-poems. We cannot think of harmony without melody, though we may have melody alone. We

cannot have color alone, and line, without color, has (as we have seen) mainly intellectual qualities compared with schemes of colour. The Impressionist wished to make his picture a form of colour orchestration, but colour harmony and contrast is a single impression, the effects are simultaneous, and so are lacking in that emotional quality of expectancy which is a characteristic of music, a quality which has presented great promises to such recent experimenters in color-music as Favre, Schooling and Rimington; where an attempt has been made (in the direction which carries the theory of Impressionism to its logical extreme) to approximate this condition with respect to colour. In describing a recent instrument (Rimington, *Color Music* p. 72) for the production of such color-music, the inventor records his experiments on the introduction of form and comes to the conclusion that if used at all, it should be indefinite and merely decorative. It was this decorative (rather than imitative) character on which the Impressionists insisted. Of Cézanne it is said (Maurice Denis: *Art. Burlington Mag.* Feb. and Mar. 1910): He imitates objects without any exactitude and without an accessory interest of sentiment or of thought. When he imagines a sketch he assembles colours and forms without any literary preoccupation: his aim is nearer to that of a carpet-weaver than of a Delacroix, transforming into

colour-harmony but with dramatic or lyric intention a scene from the Bible or Shakespere." In a similar strain writes Van Gogh in a letter: Au lieu de chercher a rendre exactement ce que j'ai devant les yeux, je me sers de la couleur plus arbitrairement pour m'exprimer fortement. Laissons cela en tant que theorie, mais je vais te donner un exemple de ce que je veux dire: je voudrai faire le portrait dun ami artiste que reve des grands reves, qui travaille comme le rossignol chante, parce que cest ainsi la nature. Ce homme sera blond. &c. (Meier-Gräfe, I, 209). How far, then, can a scheme of colour-combinations - Van Gogh's view of Arles or Monet's "Haystacks" series, for example - be justified on this isolated ground? Can the pleasurable impression be constant in revival? Is the variety of stimulus from colour-harmony of itself sufficient to be permanently pleasurable? It has been shewn (see Valentine and Washburn) that the agreeableness of a colour is affected not only by brightness, hue and saturation but also by space, duration of stimulus and subjective conditions. The great part of the effects of colour-contrast depend on such relations. On the optical grounds of such contrasts the Impressionists based their programme. They saw that color when mixed on the palette and modified on the canvas to express shape lost its brightness. They

sacrificed shape therefore to gain brilliancy so the colour came to have decorative rather than imitative significance. Knowing that all our perceptions involve judgments, they trusted to obtain perspective by values, i.e. the suggestion of distance by degrees of light or dark intensity. For this reason their shadows are equally full of colour but colour of a different quality. It is colour with profuse patches of blue in it, because the complementary of blue is the warm yellowish tone of full sunlight, which was the theme of most of their pictures. The sensuous pleasure arising from such combinations apparently depends to a great extent on the vividness of the impression. It has been claimed as one of the triumphs of Impressionism that for "strength and brilliancy of general tone and for decorative effect they have few, if any, equals;" and that "Monet and his followers raised the color scale many degrees in brightness." The psychologist, setting aside as a question for aesthetics the value of this method to the technique of painting, is able here to point out that vividness of impression, though a well-recognised means of producing aesthetic results in cruder forms as in barbaric art and in popular decoration, is a dangerous ground for permanency of pleasurable revival (Marshall op.cit.334), and "that the avoidance of continuity of

vivid presentation of any one set of contents is a necessity if pain is to be avoided." It would seem indeed that the Impressionists by defying academic ideas and aiming at character, as Flaubert, the Goncourts, and Zola did in the novel, were guilty of a psychological confusion. It is true that the predominance during the 19th century of music and landscape-painting (with its attendant emphasis on colour) had made the scope of aesthetics much wider and the difficulty of giving an inclusive signification to the term much greater. But the art-impulse and its psychological basis still remained; and in spite of the evolution of materials and technique, the idea of beauty underlies all its activities. The Impressionists denied the place of non-aesthetic elements in art, and relied on truth of colour, not as beauty but as character. Yet character is a determination of judgment, which is itself a non-aesthetic element. Truth of colouring, as Miss Puffer convincingly points out, is not synonymous with beauty of colouring. So that if we seek to neglect attention in attaining to sensuous absorption, we miss that sentiment of harmony, that "faith in the reality of the unreal" which the imagination creates for us. It makes more evident how clearly the ideating function of attention controls every stage of the transformation from the simple

feelings to the aesthetic sentiment. This ideating element always tends to the suppression of feeling by the introduction of non-aesthetic elements. The struggle has been brilliantly analysed in Nietzsche's Birth of Tragedy and only by the vigorous partisanship of modern experimental psychology has the fundamental function of emotion as the basis of the art-impulse been maintained. This struggle is all the greater because the business of art has to do - not with the feeling itself - but with the mainly intellectual reproduction of feeling - "emotion recollected in tranquillity." With it are fused therefore many non-aesthetic elements, such as information, propitiation, stimulation to work, magical efficacy (Hirn op.cit.301), and this mysterious fusion is the eternal problem of beauty. As emotion has its basis in physical response to external stimuli, so the expression of emotion has its basis in the materials that condition every art-form. The artist must recognise as Walter Pater says "his responsibility to the materials of his art." Impressionism came from a sense of this responsibility. Manet, in the catalogue of his exhibition (1867) said: "It is the effect of sincerity to give a painter's works a character that makes them resemble a protest whereas the painter has only thought of rendering his

impressions." When the children in the last act of "The Blue Bird" tell their wonderful adventures of the seen-unseen to their parents, their mother at once says to her husband: "They're ill. Fetch a doctor." And that is the popular verdict on Impressionism, the verdict which cannot comprehend the true artist's thought of his material, of its beauties, of its limitations, of its propriety to the task of self-expression. As R.A.M. Stevenson reminds us in the last chapter of his fascinating book on Velasquez, "Léon Pelouse, the French landscape-painter used to say that the gift of the naturalist lay in the power of recreating the eye of the child." In that saying lies the value of Impressionism to the art of our time.

